

Mr. C. E. JOHNSTON (Bow River): Mr. Speaker, I desire to say a few words at this time. I spoke on this question before and I had intended to leave the rest of my remarks until the bill was in committee and we were discussing it clause by clause. The parliamentary assistant during the course of his remarks stated that the condition of housing in Canada was exceptionally good.

Mr. McILRAITH: Not the condition of housing, no.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Should I say the progress of construction?

Mr. McILRAITH: Yes, as compared with other countries.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I think there is another point of view in that regard. I agree with the parliamentary assistant when he says that there has been good progress in the construction of homes, but I am a firm believer that it is better to build one good house than two poor ones. I have made that statement on several occasions. During the first few years of this program the houses that were built were nothing but a shame and disgrace.

After the program had been in effect for two or three years and there was sufficient time to know what type of house was being built, I recall vividly drawing to the attention of the government the condition of some of the houses which had been built in Hull and which I had personally visited. I think I was possibly the first one in this house to criticize the type of construction that was being carried on, particularly in western Canada and more definitely in Calgary. I recall that the minister stated at that time that the facts which I had brought forth were not true; yet the parliamentary assistant will recall that we have spent millions of dollars in repairing houses that were classed as new houses.

Mr. HOWE: Is the hon. member referring to the program covered by this bill?

Mr. JOHNSTON: Not particularly. I was speaking of housing generally.

Mr. HOWE: The hon. member should make that clear.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I will agree with the minister when he says that my remarks do not pertain specifically to the bill under discussion, but it has been drawn to my attention that they are just as close to the topic under discussion as were those a while ago of the parliamentary assistant.

Mr. MacINNIS: That would not be very close.

Mr. JOHNSTON: Having had experience with the houses that were built in the past, I thought the minister of reconstruction should pay particular attention to the type of house that is now being built. Coming a little closer to the minister's question, I would draw his attention to the type of wartime housing built last year. I visited some of the houses which had been built in Calgary along the railroad tracks, and at that time I did not think the way the houses were being prefabricated was good for the housing program. I am convinced that that type of house will not stand up. I think the change that has been made, where the individual has more control over his house, will result in a better type of house. I was never and am not now one of those who think the best type of house can be built by mass production. My view is that you cannot build a whole side of a house and then transport it a long distance on a truck, erect it and nail it into position, and have as sound a construction as when you build step by step right on the foundation.

Mr. HOWE: The hon. member for Lethbridge (Mr. Blackmore) was advocating a worse type of house.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I cannot help that. He was speaking on his own responsibility.

Mr. HOWE: Your party will have to get together.

Mr. JOHNSTON: I am speaking of the type of house that is being built by the government. The hon. member for Lethbridge was speaking of the type of house that should be built—two very different things. I think the fault was that the government did not have enough competent inspectors, but under this new program which the minister is now proposing the same inspectors, in many cases, will supervise the construction. Unless a change is made in supervision and inspection, I am quite sure that the houses built will not be up to the proper standard.

When the parliamentary assistant was discussing the houses he said that Canada should not be compared with Great Britain, and I agree because conditions in the two countries are not comparable at all. Great Britain is having difficulty in getting materials and has a great shortage of labour. But we in this country, if our resources were channeled into the proper courses, would not have difficulty in getting supplies for building private homes. The fact is, however, that too much material is being channeled into commercial construction.

I agree that some capital construction is necessary, but not to the extent of eliminating